

# 'You just fly,' says islander as he glides across Toronto harbour in his iceboat

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Photo by: Hannah Mittelstaedt

Iceboating on Toronto Harbour January 3<sup>rd</sup> Daniel Lister, left, and his brother Nathan, make adjustments

An iced-over Lake Ontario brought a Toronto man back to enjoy the iceboating he enjoyed in his childhood. PortsToronto and police say that no one should be on the ice.

By: TAMAR HARRIS - Staff Reporter

Dwarfed by the Toronto skyline, Daniel Lister hops in his iceboat and shoots off across the frozen lake. On the ice covering the Toronto Harbour, he picks up speed quickly in his kayak-sized iceboat, its sail clattering above him. It's a winter hobby that the Toronto islander has taken part in for years with his father, Martin. "Pretty much immediately, the wind catches and you accelerate like mad," Lister said. "You just get going . . . You just fly." A video he posted online shows him iceboating along the coast of the Toronto Island on a cloudy, grey Wednesday. Lister, a life-long Torontonians, has been iceboating since he was young. Today, he and his father iceboat on the south side of the Toronto Harbour (avoiding the side closest to the city) and on the Toronto Island Long Pond. "It's really fun," Lister

said. “You go incredibly fast, way faster than when you’re sailing on water, and it’s just a fun, exhilarating experience.”

Not everyone is thrilled by the ride; authorities, including PortsToronto and police, say no one should be on the ice. “No ice is safe ice in the port and harbour of Toronto,” said Angus Armstrong, PortToronto’s harbour master in an email. He cautioned that, because the harbour remains active throughout the winter, “ongoing activity . . . prevents long-term ice formation and creates unsafe conditions for those attempting to cross frozen waterways by foot.”

Lister called iceboating a “straightforward” sport. “If you know how to sail, you’ll know how to iceboat,” Lister said. “They’re very similar — just one is a lot faster.” Iceboating is a long-standing Toronto tradition that’s tapered off in recent years. It was both a popular sport and a mode of transportation during cold winter months. “There used to be tons of iceboating in Toronto,” Lister said. “There used to be races, (and) large iceboats that would take a crew of people, instead of just one.” Lister speculated that the Harbour irregularly freezing over could be one reason iceboating has declined. “These days, with global warming, the harbour is freezing less and less often,” he said. “The last two winters, the harbour didn’t freeze at all and we weren’t able to go.” Const. Ricardo Gomez, who has been with the Toronto police’s Marine Unit for more than six years, called someone breaking through the ice a life-or-death incident. “People think, in general, that if you break through the ice, it’s hypothermia that’s the danger. But it’s not. It’s actually cold shock response.”

Gomez emphasized that people should keep off the ice in the inner harbour, which he said is covered in a maze of channels. “You haven’t heard about anything happening in a few years because the harbour hasn’t frozen over,” he said. “I think it’s very important to get the message out because there will potentially be a tragedy if the word doesn’t get out.”